

February 23, 2006

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U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon today joined nearly two dozen of his colleagues in a letter to President George Bush, asking him to halt the pending deal with the [United Arab Emirates](#) -owned company, Dubai Ports World.

"Though I've only been in Washington for just over a year, I've seen very few issues that are truly bipartisan. The opposition to this port deal is one of those and I am sure that Democrats and Republicans in Congress are going to come together quickly on this," said Melancon.

"Though initial reports focused only on six ports, including New Orleans, I am very concerned about the effects this deal would have on the Ports of Baton Rouge and Lake Charles as well. They are two of twenty American ports whose operations would be affected if this deal goes through."

Following is the text of the letter:

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to urge the Administration to halt the pending deal for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to gain control of significant operations at 20 major U.S. ports on the East and Gulf Coasts of the United States - in the post 9-11 world in which security is paramount. Since September 11th, our national port security is of vital interest; and a contract to a foreign national company over the operation of our nation's major ports is an inherently bad idea at this moment in time.

The decision by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) to allow the sale of port operations to a foreign government raises serious security concerns. We understand CFIUS did not include background checks of senior managers of Dubai Ports World or a study of how the company screens its workers. The failure to conduct such basic evaluations during this time of heightened national

security concerns demands a more thorough vetting. This seems particularly easy to understand given at least two of the 9/11 hijackers lived in the United Arab Emirates prior to the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and that money that helped to finance the attacks on American soil came from the UAE.

This is not a trade issue, as the Administration has claimed; and far more ports are involved than has been reported. If the UAE wants to buy from us, they are welcome to do that. The 20 ports include the major East Coast ports and those along the Gulf coasts, through which the nation's food and oil pass daily. Having a foreign government in control of critical port functions like securing cargo and the hiring of security personnel is too high of a risk for the American people at vulnerable U.S. ports.

We expect Congress to act on this at the first opportunity; on Monday or Tuesday of next week. We believe bipartisan legislation will have the support of nearly all members of Congress. And we hope you will cease the talk of vetoing any legislation Congress will pass in the national interest. Congress and the President are co-equal branches of government. It is important to note that 270 members of the House of Representatives and 67 Senators can override a veto we determine to be opposed to the national interest.

This is unquestionably not in the national interest, and most certainly cannot be done beyond the public eye. We respectfully request you stay the decision on this matter and conduct a more thorough review of this particular purchase with such gargantuan access to vulnerable infrastructure and insights into our port security.

Sincerely,